

Missouri Headwaters Legacy Trail and Bridge/Approach Project

DECISION NOTICE

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1400 S. 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718

December 14, 2006

Description of the Proposed Action:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) proposed to construct a ¼ mile pedestrian/bicycle trail in Missouri Headwaters State Park, and to collaboratively oversee the installation of a pedestrian/bicycle bridge at Milwaukee Fishing Access Site (FAS). These two projects will be the final segments in the six-mile Legacy Trail connecting Three Forks, Montana, to Missouri Headwaters State Park.

Public Comment:

Public notification of the availability of an Environmental Assessment (EA) evaluating this proposed action was published in the Helena Independent Record, the Bozeman Daily Chronicle newspapers, and on the FWP website. In addition, known interested individuals, agencies, and organizations were sent copies of the EA.

Two public comments were received concerning this draft EA during a comment period running from October 2 through October 31, 2006.

Both comments were supportive of the proposed action.

FWP staff offered comments and concerns for the maintenance of the Milwaukee FAS and had questions regarding the trail connection into Headwaters State Park.

FWP response to concerns, questions and comments on the proposed action:

Q: How come no 495 checklists and SHPO report (for Milwaukee and HWSP properties)?

A: The 495 checklist is included in Appendix 1, SHPO was consulted and that language is included in Comment 12a.

Q: How will fishing from the bridge be addressed?

A: At this time there is no statute or regulation prohibiting the fishing from a pedestrian bridge. In conjunction with the City of Three Forks, FWP will monitor pedestrian activity on the bridge to assure that conflicts are mitigated in the future through appropriate signing.

Q: How will the new trail connect into the existing Headwaters trails?

A: The location of the proposed new section of trail can be seen in Figures 6 and 7 of the EA. The new trail would divert slightly off the Highway right-of-way and maintain that direction for 80 ft. The trail would then turn north, following the old county road until ending at Park headquarters. While the pavement has been removed from the old county road, the ground is already firm and level, making it ideal for a trail bed. Minimal work will be needed to transform the old roadbed into a bike/pedestrian trail. The trail will transition from asphalt to a one-inch minus road mix at the Park boundary. This type of trail bed material, besides being cost effective, is more primitive and would be more consistent with existing trails in the Park.

Q: Don't you think there should be a link up?

A: After reaching the park headquarters, leading from the park headquarters visitors entering the park along the trail can easily access and continue to travel along existing trails within the park. Trail markers and park brochures currently exist to aid trail users.

Q: It should say the new trail would turn north at its current terminus.

A: From the northern end of the asphalt trail, which travels north and parallels the state highway, at the park boundary the new park trail section will continue in a northerly direction to the park headquarters.

Q: If the trail is paved across the existing Milwaukee parking lot, there will a potential for conflict with vehicles between pedestrians and bicyclists and a substantial increase of wear on the asphalt by vehicles. How can/will we address this?

A: The approach to the bridge from the existing asphalt trail will be elevated w/ a retaining wall in order to meet Americans w/ Disabilities Act standards. The elevation of the asphalt trail to the proposed approach is greater than the fishing access parking area grade, which prohibits vehicle access to the trail and bridge approach. Additional precautions could be placed in area near the existing site latrine to further limit vehicle access to the trail system.

Q: In the narrative, the text reads, " Region 2 Weed Management Plan"... This should read "Region 3".

A: There was an editorial error, which missed this text. This project lies within the administrative area of FWP's Region 3. Region 3 has a Weed Management Plan in place and will continue to follow that plan and adhere to state wide weed control standards.

Q: 10f narrative. Will Three Forks maintain the section across the FAS as well? Is \$200 enough for annual maintenance?

A: The community of Three Forks is committed to maintaining the trail and the trail corridor to the Missouri Headwaters State Park boundary. This commitment includes the bridge approaches.

State Historical Preservation Office Concerns

The State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) expressed concerns for the ¼ mile of proposed trail that would pass through Missouri Headwaters State Park. At SHPO's request Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) contracted David Ferguson of GCM Services, Inc. for a Class III Cultural Resource Inventory to be completed of the proposed ¼ mile trail segment.

David Ferguson of GCM Services compiled a six page report concluding the low likelihood of adverse impacts to cultural resources, and that the project should be allowed to proceed as proposed.

FWP received SHPO concurrence that potential adverse impacts to the Park's cultural resources did not exist.

These two reports can be viewed upon request of the Region Three office.

Decision:

Based on analyses in the Draft EA and comments on the proposed action, it is my decision to proceed with Alternative B and construct a ¼ mile pedestrian/bicycle trail in Missouri Headwaters State Park and to collaboratively oversee the installation of a pedestrian/bicycle bridge at Milwaukee FAS. I have evaluated the draft document and applicable laws, regulations, and policies, and have determined that this action will not have a significant effect on the human or natural environment. The completed environmental assessment is an appropriate level of analysis to identify and address all significant issues associated with this project. For this reason, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

There is an editorial correction to the Draft Environmental Assessment. This editorial correction replaces "Region 2 Weed Management Plan" with "Region 3 Weed Management Plan." The Draft Environmental Assessment, together with the Decision Notice, will serve as the final document for this proposal.

The Final EA and the Decision Notice for this project is available from Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region Three Headquarters, 1400 S. 19th Avenue, Bozeman, MT 59718, or online at: <http://www.fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices>.

Please direct all inquiries to FWP Region Three Headquarters c/o Missouri Headwaters Legacy Trail and Bridge/Approach Project EA, at the address provided above.

Patrick J. Flowers
Region Three Supervisor